

Message Text

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ACTION SCSE-00

INFO OCT-01 ARA-10 ISO-00 SCA-01 H-02 L-03 /017 W

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P 232030Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6474

UNCLAS BUENOS AIRES 4846

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, SHUM, CASC, AR

SUBJECT: THREATENED CLOSURE BY GOA OF WATCHTOWER AND BIBLE
TRACT SOCIETY (JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES IN ARGENTINA)

1. ON JULY 22, 1976 AMERICAN CITIZEN CHARLES EISENHOWER, HEAD OF WATCHTOWER AND BIBLE TRACT SOCIETY IN ARGENTINA (JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES) INFORMED EMBASSY OF VISIT BY FEDERAL POLICE TO SOCIETY'S HEADQUARTERS IN BUENOS AIRES ON JULY 20. PURPOSE OF VISIT WAS TO CLOSE DOWN PREMISES IN COMPLIANCE WITH 1950 DECREE BANNING SOCIETY'S RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES IN ARGENTINA. DISCUSSIONS WITH POLICE OFFICIALS AT THAT TIME RESULTED IN HEADQUARTERS REMAINING OPEN WHILE SOCIETY APPEALS ACTION. APPEAL WAS PRESENTED THIS WEEK AND GOA DECISION IS EXPECTED WITHIN NEXT FEW DAYS. MR. EISENHOWER HAS ASKED EMBASSY ASSISTANCE IN SECURING FAVORABLE DECISION.

2. THE ACTIVITIES OF THE SOCIETY WERE BANNED IN ARGENTINA IN MAY 1950 FOR "OPPOSING MILITARY SERVICE AND SALUTING THE FLAG". ALTHOUGH DECREE WAS REAFFIRMED IN 1959 THE GOA NEVER PREVENTED SOCIETY FROM FUNCTIONING BUT MERELY CURTAILED ACTIVITIES. MR. EISENHOWER STATED THAT THERE ARE NOW 14 AMERICAN MISSIONARIES, 1500 FULL TIME MINISTERS, 33,500 PART TIME PREACHERS AND OVER 200,000

MEMBERS THAT WOULD BE AFFECTED BY GOA DECISION TO; SHUT DOWN ORGANIZATION. HE ALSO STATED THAT IF SHUT DOWN WERE TO OCCUR JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES PREPARED TO MOUNT WORLD WIDE CAMPAIGN AGAINST ARGENTINA USING ALL RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO CHURCH.

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3. EMBASSY HAS NO PRECEDENT OR SUBJECT FILES ON CASE
OF THIS NATURE AND WOULD ACCORDINGLY APPRECIATE
DEPARTMENT'S GUIDANCE AS TO WHAT ACTION IF ANY IT
WOULD BE APPROPRIATE FOR EMBASSY TO TAKE IN BEHALF OF
ORGANIZATION.
CHAPLIN

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